



# THE ZIZ AND THE HANUKKAH MIRACLE

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*The Ziz, a huge and clumsy bird, helps the Maccabees find enough oil to light the menorah and restore the temple, leading to the miracle we celebrate every Hanukkah.*

**H**anukkah falls on the 25th of the Hebrew month of Kislev, on or near the winter solstice, at just that time of year when the days are their shortest and light is at a premium. No wonder the Ziz and other animals are sad at summer's end, just as many people are. Enter *Hanukkah*, a celebration of the miracle of oil lasting longer than anyone could dare hope and the triumph of light over darkness!

## GEMILUT CHASADIM – ACTS OF KINDNESS

One powerful Jewish value is helping others through thoughtful acts—in Hebrew, *gemilut chasadim*. Sharing is an act that is quite simple to consider but, as the Ziz shows, sometimes difficult to perform. *Hanukkah* is a perfect time for sharing, whether the Ziz's oil or something your family has to offer others.

## MYTHICAL CREATURES IN JEWISH LITERATURE

Fantastical creatures such as the Ziz help explain historical events and elaborate on important themes. Another such literary being is the clay-like golem, created centuries ago to help the Jewish people in times of trouble.

## USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Here are some ideas and questions for you and your family to consider:

- The animals in this story were sad as the days got shorter. How did the Ziz try to solve this problem?
- The Ziz went high up on Mt. Sinai to talk to God. Do you have a special quiet place where you like to go to be alone?
- The tiny mice were able to help in the Temple in a way that the giant Ziz couldn't. In what special ways can children help that grown-ups can't?
- As a family, walk through your home, noticing the many things that provide light. This is a great time to talk about conserving energy and turning out lights when they aren't needed.
- Though he was reluctant, the Ziz shared his oil. Think of ways your family can share. At Hanukkah this might mean taking homemade treats to a nursing home, donating a toy to a local shelter, or inviting a neighbor to your home to light Hanukkah candles. Pj